

Around the House

Volume 3, Issue 1

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Housing and Community Services Department Mission

... to provide housing and
related services
to benefit the citizens and
neighborhoods of
Wichita

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2006—A Time for Fresh Starts and New Beginnings ...

As you can see, the Around the House newsletter has made a fresh start with a new format. It is designed to present an easier-to-read letter with even more useful content.

Inside you will find additional information to help you make a fresh start in 2006.

The Housing and Community Services Department, along with the rest of City government, is embarking on a fresh initiative called Transforming Wichita. The objective of this process is to more closely tie what we do as government employees, with what the citizens of Wichita think is most important.

The City will reinforce the importance of this process by evaluating employee performance according to how well we meet these goals. It is an exciting time for us as we plan for this process, because it will encourage staff to be creative and innovative in delivering the best services possible.

In addition to participating in Transforming Wichita, the Housing and Community Services Department, along with the Housing Advisory Board, will present a proposed Comprehensive Housing Policy to the Mayor and City Council for their review, discussion, and ultimately their approval. The policy includes a focus on increasing the



amount of affordable housing in Wichita, considers various ways to fund such housing, and also takes into account the special needs of various populations, including the homeless.

A Redevelopment Authority is also on the horizon for the City of Wichita. The RDA, as it is called, will be one of the tools used to acquire property and develop it for residential and commercial purposes to revitalize distressed neighborhoods and stabilize them so that people will want to live, work and play in Wichita!

But Not Forgetting the Events of the Past

While we have many plans for the future, in many ways they are built upon some of the experiences of the past. Certainly we cannot forget the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The message from that experience is that as a

community we need to remember that homelessness can occur at any time, to persons who least expect it. After the hurricanes, our country was challenged to create a 'safety net' for the displaced persons. While we responded well, we must

plan ahead for emergency, long term, affordable housing.



That is one of the messages of the Housing Policy mentioned above.



From the Director's Chair Mary K. Vaughn

Last year the Housing and Community Services Department issued an invitation to Section 8 clients and Public Housing tenants, to take advantage of employment opportunities which may be available in programs which receive Federal funds. Many of you responded with an interest. Unfortunately we were not able to make any 'matches' last year but we want to keep the door of opportunity open.

Therefore I am again urging any Public Housing or Section 8 residents who is interested in employment with the City of Wichita and/or the Housing Authority, to submit

an updated statement of interest, using the enclosed form. This form should be returned at your earliest convenience to:

**Wichita Housing & Community
Services Department**

332 N. Riverview

Wichita, KS 67203

Please note that you must attach a resume or other evidence of your formal training in the areas listed. The City remains committed to seeing that employment opportunities are made available to qualified Public Housing and Section 8 residents, although this opportunity does not guarantee a job. It does guarantee that you will be considered for any

job for which you qualify.

Employment is obviously one way that you can improve your life and that of your family. Another method of self-improvement is education. In the following article, you will find details of an opportunity for a Public Housing or Section 8 resident to apply for and perhaps receive, an educational scholarship. I encourage you to take a look at this and complete it if there is a qualifying high school senior in your household.

Resolve to make 2006 the year you take positive steps to improve your life!

Scholarships for Housing Authority Residents

The Wichita Housing Authority is taking applications for the Stephen J. Bollinger Memorial Scholarship. The scholarship fund will be administered by the national Public Housing Authority Directors Association Scholarship Committee and offers one annual scholarship for the nation in the amount of \$7,000 to a high school senior that is a resident of a public housing authority. The money will go directly to the college that the student will be attending. Wichita Housing Authority Section 8

and Public Housing residents may pick up an application at the Housing and Community Services Office located at 332 N. Riverview.

With the application the applicant will need to provide a high school transcript indicating at least a "B" average, a written recommendation

from a teacher or counselor, a written personal recommendation along with a typewritten essay on "How my public housing and high school experiences influenced my life." The completed application must be received on or before February 7, 2006, at the Housing and Community Services Office at 332 N. Riverview, Wichita, KS 67203.

***Education is for improving
the lives of others
and for leaving your
community and world
better than you found it.
Marian Wright Edelman***

Behind the Scenes ...

This new feature will take a closer look at some of the people who make the Housing and Community Services Department click. It will include a welcome to new employees, as well as staff accomplishments and achievements. This time we are highlighting an achievement.



We're proud of
our people!

A public housing tenant recently took the time to write a complimentary letter regarding services rendered by Maintenance Worker **Keith Talbert**. Her letter said, in part: "Mr. Talbert was gracious and polite, and never once made me feel that he was put out or upset to be clearing my sewer

line at 1:30 am, in 20 degree weather, no less. Mr. Keith Talbert is an asset to the City of Wichita and a very kind person. I was glad that he handled my emergency, though I hope I never have to be the cause of inconveniencing him again."

Thank you Keith, for displaying what we all strive for— high quality customer service!

Family Self-Sufficiency Plans for 2006

The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) team is excited about changes planned for the 2006 FSS calendar year. They have made adjustments to the mandatory workshop series and have added a new training series called CreditSmart. All of these changes will broaden and enhance the program, and provide even more opportunities for FSS participants to reach their goals.

The FSS workshop schedule has been developed using feedback received from participant survey responses. CreditSmart workshops are being offered in partnership with the Urban League of the MidPlains.

Please put the following workshop schedule dates on your 2006 calendars. Except as noted, meeting times and locations will be announced throughout the year.

2006 Family Self-Sufficiency Workshops

Required for all FSS Participants

January 12: New FSS Participants
 February 9: Becoming a Homeowner, Part 1
 March 9: Becoming a Homeowner, Part 2
 April 13: Entrepreneurship
 May 11: Safety
 June 8: Physical Fitness, Health & Nutrition
 July 13: Adult Education
 August 10: Life Skills/Organization
 September 14: Career Building
 October 12: Domestic Violence
 November 9: Understanding Your FSS Escrow

2006 CreditSmart Workshops

Required for anyone pursuing homeownership, and open to all FSS participants

April: Your Credit & Why it is Important
 May: Managing Your Money & Goal Setting
 June: Banking Services & Establishing and Maintaining Good Credit
 July: Understanding Credit Scoring & Thinking Like a Lender
 August: Avoiding Credit Traps
 September: Restoring Your Credit & Planning for Your Future
 October: Becoming a Homeowner

Dates and details will be provided later.

New Section 8 Rent Standards - Impact 2, 3, 4 Bedroom Units

Wichita Housing Authority new rent Payment Standards went into effect January 1, 2006. The new standards will increase for studio, 5 and 6 bedroom units. One bedroom units will stay the same. Standards for 2, 3 and 4 bedrooms will decrease.

What does this mean for families living in 2, 3 and 4 bedroom units?

If your landlord's combined requested rent rate and projected utility allowance (rent to owner) is higher than the Payment Standards approved for 2006, you as a tenant may have to make a higher monthly rent payment depending on your income and family size. The Housing Authority subsidy payment

to your landlord is based on the lesser amount of Payment Standard or rent to owner. These changes will be implemented upon annual

Plan ahead for a possible rent subsidy decrease in 2006!

recertification. Discuss with your Leasing Specialist, how these changes may impact your future plans to relocate to another unit.

Current HAP Payment Schedule

<i>Month</i>	<i>Mail Date</i>
FEBRUARY	January 31, 2006
MARCH	February 28, 2006
APRIL	March 31, 2006
MAY	April 28, 2006

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

332 N. Riverview
Wichita, KS 67203

Phone: 316-462-3700
Fax: 316-462-3719
Email: www.wichita.gov/

Published by:
City of Wichita
Housing & Community Services
Department

Editor:
Mary K. Vaughn

Contributors:
Tom Byler
Shaun Davis
Gail Lotson

Mailing Address Line 1
Mailing Address Line 2
Mailing Address Line 3
Mailing Address Line 4
Mailing Address Line 5

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www.wichita.gov/CityOffices/Housing

Section 8 Homeownership

The Section 8 program is proud to announce that during 2005, five families achieved their goal of homeownership. That brings to 24, the total number of Section 8 clients who have achieved this milestone in their lives, since the Wichita program began.

In case you're wondering how this happened, the Section 8 Homeownership Program allows clients to apply their Section 8 rental assistance vouchers to home mortgage payments instead of applying them to rent. Section 8 homeowners may continue to receive monthly mortgage assistance up to 15 years after purchasing their home, as long as they continue to meet eligibility requirements, which include the following:

- ✓ Be an active Section 8 client in good standing
- ✓ Be a participant in the Section 8 Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program
- ✓ Have minimum annual income of at least \$10,300 unless the primary source of income is from an adult family member's disability benefits. Public assistance can only be used to meet this requirement if the applicant is elderly or disabled.

Most Section 8 homebuyers have also received loans from the City's HOMEownership 80 Program. This program assists homebuyers by providing downpayment and closing costs—which is one of the greatest barriers to homeownership.



Homeownership could be the key to a better life for you and your family.

If you are interested in the Section 8 Homeownership program, contact your Leasing Specialist at the Section 8 office. Program requirements are subject to change so this will ensure that you obtain the most current information. Be sure to mention when you call, that you would also like to take advantage of the HOMEownership 80 program.